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## THE GENESIS OF ETHICAL ELEMENTS.

### I. SELECTION AND SURVIVAL.

IF we would understand how a race becomes acclimated in a new region—the French in Algiers or the Dutch at the Cape—we must make large use of the principle of selection and survival. The immigrants always vary considerably among themselves in power of resistance to the climate, and if we divide them into two equal groups, of those who are little suited to it, and those who are more suited to it, we shall find the death-rate much higher in the former group. This enables the offspring of the latter group to gain on the others, till in a few generations the immigrating race has, as it were, been made over and adapted to the new climate. Now, this principle of unequal death-rates (or birth-rates) is the key, not only to acclimation, but to all manner of fitnesses in nature.

But something very like it is at work in society. There were many styles of gold-washing on the Sacramento in 1849. But one style was gradually found to be more convenient than the others, and became after a while the standard way of washing out gold, which newcomers adopted as a matter of course. A like weeding out of inferior individual practices brings to light a standard form of pot or tool or weapon, a standard mode of tilling or breeding, a standard sex relation or education of the young, which is uniform for all, possesses authority, and may be termed a *culture element*. Besides this evolution of customs and forms of life guided by the principles of convenience, there is an evolution of beliefs guided by the principle of verity. When many sayings concerning anything are afloat, opinions about dreams or sickness or darkness or weather or good luck, the high death-rate among them insures the triumph of those views which for the time and place seem to be the *truest*. In this way arise general beliefs which come in time to get a good deal of social force behind them.

Once an element has run the gauntlet and emerged triumphant from the rivalry, it becomes fixed in custom and thus shielded from competition, until perhaps it is confronted with a different practice or belief that has won the favor of some other group. Then deadly comparisons are made, and weeding out begins again. One of the great agencies in human progress, then, has been the extension of intercourse between peoples which have been working independently at civilization, for this brings in once more the healthy process of selection and survival, and permits an all-round advance in the culture elements. Here, for one thing, is the secret of the great historic cross-fertilizations of culture—Phœnicia with Egypt, Greece with the Orient, Israel with Hellenism, Christendom with the Moors, the Occident with India.

This struggle of rival elements of culture is by no means the same thing as the struggle between persons. When one race has overrun and trampled down another, it is always interesting to see if the spiritual contest of the two civilizations has the same issue as the physical contest of the two races. Will the upper civilization smother the lower, as in the case of the Spaniards and the Aztecs, the Germans and the Wends, the Romans and the Etruscans, the Saracens and the Roman Africans; or will the one beneath grow up and subdue the one above, as the Romans were captivated by Greek culture, the barbarians by Roman civilization, or the Mongols by Islam?

The reader will hardly have failed to notice that in such forms of control as *public opinion*, *law*, *suggestion*, *personality*, there is a pretty direct and immediate management of one person by others. But in other kinds of control something comes between controller and controlled—some ideal, religious belief, symbol, or standard that is a necessary means in the business, and that is not originated for the particular occasion. The idea as to what is “nice” or “not nice” for a woman to do, the low appraisal put on “the flesh,” the labels “right” and “wrong” pasted on to every species of action, the belief that “God sees,” the doctrine that men are “brothers,” the ideal known as

"the good citizen," the symbol "Columbia"—these are examples of what we may call *ethical elements*, to distinguish them from other classes of culture elements. Now, some of these are very old. They are detached from persons, and float free in the descending stream of culture. They are ownerless, unless we can regard them as the possession of society. In some cases we cannot trace them back to wise or good individuals. They seem rather to be the results of social reflection, products of what we might term the social mind. But, in that case, how is their genesis to be understood?

It may be suggested that an ethical element such as a social ideal or valuation results from the compounding of many private admirations and estimates. Tom, Dick, and Harry, it may be said, cast their ideas on a subject into the common stock of ideas on that subject, circulating about in the channels of social intercourse; and from this mingling there is precipitated after a time a typical or average opinion. Each ethical element, then, is the expression of a consensus, the result of a vast social symposium. In the social mind is formed a composite photograph of what Tom, Dick, and Harry have contributed to the common stock; and in this image rises a social standard or estimate which can be used in the fashioning of individual character.

The weak point in such a theory of genesis is that it gives no room for moral progress. In conduct man's path has been upward; and this not so much by an improvement of his nature as by the influence of ethical factors external to him. But if he has been pulled upward by certain elements, these must have been ahead of and above him, not simply on his level. If the ideal of "man," "gentleman," or "citizen" is simply an ungolden mean between the aspirations of the topmost and those of the bottom-most people, then when it becomes a ruling force in the lives of individuals it is just as certain to drag some downward as to draw others upward. The ethical elements we have made so much of would then be as impotent to lift the average man as those heathen Canaanite deities of whom we read: "The attributes ascribed to them were a mere reflex of the attributes of their worshipers, and what character they had was

nothing else than a personification of the character of the nation that acknowledged their lordship."<sup>1</sup>

But the fact is, the genesis of ethical elements, as well as the genesis of customs and beliefs, is a process of selection and survival. Just as the development of Zuni or Lydian pottery is due to a competition which makes the handiest and handsomest form of pot the prevailing type, and to the renewal of this healthy competition whenever an inventive potter or a foreign art supplies a new pattern, so the improvement in the ethical strand of a civilization is due to the survival and ascendancy of those elements which are best adapted to an orderly social life.

Let us now follow closely the selections and rejections whereby the ideal or judgment of conduct that emerges and reigns in a body of associates comes to be so different from the actual ideals or judgments of the persons themselves. In the first place it must be recognized that human intercourse is far from being a complete mutual *exposé*, inasmuch as converse is a social act implying a willingness to tolerate and a wish to please. Without adopting the *mot* that "language is given us to conceal thought," we can yet safely say that only a part of the contents of one's mind is communicated to others. How much is withheld for fear of disagreeable consequences! How much is kept back lest it stir up trouble and widen the space between people! How often an exploring party has kept on longer than anyone wished because each dreaded to speak out! How often a body of reluctant men have carried through a mad enterprise because each feared his protest would meet with jeers! In their baptism of fire, recruits conceal a "blue funk" under an assumed nonchalance; and this serves as a reassuring badge of the courage that the company as a whole exhibits and finally inspires in its members. The suddenness of recoil one witnesses in the retreat of a garrison, the abandonment of a strike, or the collapse of a boom is due to the fact that in a body of men the inner tension may become very great before someone speaks the word everyone is thinking, and so breaks the spell. Locked in a kind of charm we run farther and farther out on the dizzy

<sup>1</sup> W. ROBERTSON SMITH, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 66.

trestle of make-believe, till, as in Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the invisible clothes, the word of truth is spoken and we drop to the solid ground of fact.

These striking cases of reserve illustrate the truth that all speech has reference to the hearer. The communication by which associates come to have ideas and ideals in common is carried on in a propitiatory spirit, and is more or less suited to the taste of the listener. If it be otherwise, if intercourse becomes an avowal of hostile intentions or a mutual hurling of defiance, all friendly talk is soon broken off and association ends in flight or avoidance. This being granted, it is easy to see that a man will prudently lock within his own breast those notions and projects which are so egoistic and aggressive that nobody else can share them. He will cast into the stock of ideas circulating through the capillaries of intercourse only those which are not hateful or shocking to his hearer.<sup>1</sup> What the thug proposes to his fellow-thug is to butcher some third person. What the Bedouin imparts to Bedouins is not his admiration of stealing, but his admiration of stealing from outsiders. The Dyaks, talking of scalps about a camp-fire, may praise the taking of heads, but not the taking of heads from each other. Yet, if they tell us true, just that project may lurk in the recesses of each Dyak's mind. Blackfeet do rob each other. But the only predatory project that can be openly talked of, justified, and glorified in the council lodge is the robbery of aliens like Crows or settlers. The talk of a band of Mohocks about a tavern table will dilate, not on the fun of maltreating one of their own number, but on the fun of sallying out and baiting the belated burgher.

So at the very outset the contents of the social mind are morally superior to the contents of the ordinary individual mind. The stream is purer than the springs that feed it, because so much badness is stopped at the source. Now let us see, furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> "Though it may be true . . . that every individual in his own breast naturally prefers himself to all mankind, yet he dares not look mankind in the face and avow that he acts according to this principle. He feels that in this preference they can never go along with him, and that, however natural soever it may be to him, it must always appear excessive and extravagant to them." (ADAM SMITH, *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Vol. I, Part II, sec. ii, chap. 2, p. 168.)

what happens to the matter thrown into the channels of intercourse. Just what is the nature of the selection and survival that takes place there?

The clumsier ways of making pots or carts perish by refusal to imitate, the sillier beliefs about sickness or spirits by refusal to adopt. But the more sinister ideals and appraisals are eliminated chiefly by refusal to communicate. A man may take up with an anti-social idea, but he hesitates to pass it on. Occasionally a thief declares the propriety of "saving one's own bacon," but the sentiment that circulates most easily in thieftom is the vileness of "splitting on one's pals." Whispers slip furtively from mouth to ear about "discretion being the better part of valor," but what the stay-at-homes shout to the warrior is: "Bring back your shield, or be brought back on it." Take Latins in small batches under tongue-loosening conditions, and you get chuckling confidences about feats of gallantry. Take the same men in larger groups, and the ideas and ideals of conjugal fidelity enjoy as much currency as they would among Anglo-Saxons. We must not forget that a man recommends to others, not what he likes, but what he likes others to like. The opinion of buccaneers is strangely disdainful of wassail and women till snug harbor is reached. The libertine is careful not to spread an appetite that might ravage his own family. It is the predacious who have the most to say for the sacredness of the rights of property. Men, for the most part, take superior moral standards, as they take coins, not for personal use, but to pass them on to the next man.

We see, then, that some of the ideas communicated circulate readily, while others meet with difficulties in passing from man to man, and, like bad pennies, are always being rejected. In other words, there are moral ideas of short circuit and moral ideas of long circuit. The wicked ideas are not put into circulation so often as the good ones, and they drop out sooner. The ideas which propitiate, inspire confidence, and draw men closer, pass up and down in conversational channels till, like worn coins, the image and superscription of the utterer is effaced, and they are imputed to the public—or to human nature—passing current in its name and authority.

It is just this selection which explains the snug fit of early ethical elements to the needs of the group that develops them. Many of our modern moral notions have been generalized till they are out of relation to the welfare of any particular group. They prescribe a certain conduct toward *all men*. But all primitive ethics exhibits a strange double standard. Thus and thus must you treat your clansman, but on the stranger you may wreak your will. Now, if the judgments of rude men about conduct spring from faintly stirring instincts of right, from a dim sense of the good, why is there an abrupt change at the frontier of the group? If in these standards of dealing with clansmen we have the gropings of a half-awake conscience, what becomes of this conscience when the stranger appears?

But if they develop very naturally by a process of unconscious adaptation out of the mental contacts and long intercourse of associates, it is the most natural thing in the world that these ethical elements should have a short radius of operation. The Tscherkesses of the Caucasus have developed an ideal that includes prowess in cow-lifting and is a great formative influence in the lives of the young Tscherkesses. But the cows it is so fine and noble to lift are never Tscherkess cows, but always the cows of the plainsmen. Whence this limitation? Clearly it is not the voice of the natural conscience. It is rather the outcome of unconscious adaptation. However the clansmen regard each other's stock, they cannot make a cult and a glory of lifting each other's cows. The only ideal that could possibly take root and grow up was the stealing of strange cows. The radius of the moral taboo is in very truth a function of association. If any section of the clan moves away, they can no longer keep the taboo wide enough to protect their cattle. If newcomers associate freely with the clansmen, they can probably widen the taboo till it covers their herds. *For each element in a body of associates is able to influence the trend of the selections in the group-mind, and to modify thereby the ethical equipment of the group to its own advantage.*

If we understand by *ethos* a body of related standards, ideals, and valuations, then we can say that *a social ethos* distinct from



the private *ethos* is formed under the following conditions: First, the intercourse by which superior ethical elements are selected and gain currency must be long and intimate. Second, the individuals must not be very unlike or prepossessed by clashing traditions. Third, the group must not receive many strangers or have close contact with alien groups. Fourth, there must be a matrix of folk-lore, religion, literature, or art, in which the ethical gains may be imbedded and held fast. Fifth, the new ethical varieties are not safe from swamping until they have entered into tradition and the young have been reared under them.

Hitherto, when the genesis of ethical civilization has been considered, the sociologist has stood aside and let the psychologist step to the desk. But if the fitness of the ideals and standards that become paramount in the group is due to a blind selection for which nobody deserves any credit, then we no longer need trace the ethical strand in a civilization to the individual conscience. We do not need to start from a native sense of right and wrong. Men do not need to be sheep in order to develop the *ethos* of the herbivore. Even in a band of brigands or buccaneers there spring up after a while certain conventions that are moral. The conscience of the social group, as soon as it appears, is several points better than the private conscience, just because it is social. A wholly wicked idea, in being imparted to another, becomes a little less wicked, because now it excludes the thought of evil toward him. And a wickedness that can be communicated to and adopted by all persons in the group can be directed only against outsiders. There is honor among thieves because they mingle, and so arrive at a professional ethics. Pirates develop among themselves a taboo on pirate property because they live together. Accomplices develop a double standard of right, and the morality of primitive groups everywhere is nothing else at bottom than the morality of accomplices. The old notion that only men with good innate ideas can initiate a moral civilization is too much like the saying: "Who drives fat oxen must himself be fat."

In insisting that ethical elements may and do grow up in a natural way out of peaceable intercourse, we do not mean to say

that by this means men can get very far or rise very high. No advanced race has come by its moral heritage in just this way. Such noble ethical achievements as the character of Jehovah, the Persian dualism, the Stoic ideal, or the Beatitudes cannot be ascribed to slow evolution. They are as much the creation of genius as the higher gains in the arts and sciences. The reason why standards cannot become very exacting or ideals very high by way of selection and survival is that they can never rise quite clear of the vulgar private fact. The conventional valuations of things cannot shake themselves quite loose from the sensual views of the individual. The ideal that triumphs in the social mind is anchored close to earth by the base admirations of the common mortal. The notions of right that become sole legal tender in the community are tainted by the sweat and grime of private hands they must pass through. Not entirely can the ideal disengage itself from human clay.

The "volunteer crop" of morality that springs up quickly and passes into the tradition of tribes of Arabs or Samoyeds or redskins or negroes, is marked by a regard for the obvious and near-lying conditions of individual welfare. It is sure to exalt personal prowess and martial courage, and to frown upon murder, wanton aggression, theft, arson, malicious injury to property, adultery, false witness, the settlement of disputes by violence, the use of unfair weapons such as poison. But when the harm of a line of conduct is not so clear and plain, it is ignored until the more far-sighted few set up stricter standards. The development of the clan *ethos* in disapproval of lying, slander, vengeance, gambling, drunkenness, unchastity, feud, exposure of infants, or the sacrifice of widows, as well as the discovery of new forms of old vices and new corollaries of old virtues, is usually traceable to superior persons who see farther than the rest into the consequences of conduct and the laws of well-being.

## II. THE ÉLITE.

The distinct and separate ethical threads that are woven into a civilization are rarely of anonymous origin. They can usually be traced back to men of unusual insight into the requisites of

good personal and social life. The humble beginnings of a social *ethos* can be conceived as the outcome of a folk-evolution. But its later and higher stages require the inventive genius. As the origin of a form of pot or hoe is likely to be more anonymous than that of the printing press or the sewing machine, so the origin of a taboo on clan property is likely to be more anonymous than that of the Golden Rule. We can account for the clan *ethos* by selection, but we need invention to explain the rise of a national or race *ethos*. If this is so, we ought to be able to trace back the leading ethical possessions of the higher races to the influence of the few or the one. Let us see if this can be done.

It is usual to explain the ethical monotheism of Israel by a Semitic genius for religion. But, as a matter of fact, the religions of other Semitic stocks, such as Phœnicia, Moab, or Edom, never came to anything. They were not even as respectable as the religion of the primitive Celts or Germans. What gave the faith of Israel its wonderful career was its conception of an ethical god. But at first the national god of Israel was not distinct from the gods of the neighboring nations. He had made Israel his chosen people because Israel covenanted to give him worship. He was interested, not in the morals of his people, but in their loyalty to him. When evils and disasters suggested that Jehovah was estranged, his people thought to win him back by greater zeal in acts of external worship.

Later, however, we find Jehovah comes to be unlike Moloch, Melkarth, or Chemosh, the deities of the other Semitic peoples. It was discovered that he loved mercy and not sacrifice, obedience and not the fat of lambs. In him was no variableness. His will was steadily directed toward a moral aim and could not be turned aside by flattery or offerings. His dealings with his people aimed to lead them on "to higher things than their natural character inclined toward. To know Jehovah and to serve him aright involved a moral effort—a frequent sacrifice of natural inclination."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. ROBERTSON SMITH, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 67.

Now, this holy and righteous God, who championed absolute justice without weakness and without caprice, was the discovery of a handful of men, namely the Reforming Prophets. Amos, with the idea that Jehovah is an upright judge unbribable by firstlings or praise; Hosea, whose Master hated injustice and falsehood and required, above all, righteous conduct; Isaiah, whose Lord would have mercy only on those who relieved the widow and the fatherless—these were the spokesmen of a minority that finally destroyed the national character of the old religion and founded ethical monotheism. The folk were not in sympathy with the leaders who sought to impose this higher deity, and only amid continual struggles with the recalcitrant backsliding Hebrews was the moral reform carried through.

It is again to an élite that we can trace the ethical tendencies in the old Greek religion. The gods of the Greeks were mere nature gods, and had at first little interest in the conduct of their worshippers. Like all superior human beings, they demanded cleanness and comeliness in those who would approach them acceptably. Defilement, at first physical in character, debarred from intercourse with the god until certain purificatory rites had been performed. But after a time the idea grows up that not liturgical impurity alone, but moral guilt as well, debars from public worship. Wrongdoing is conceived as leaving a smirch or stench most abominable to the senses of the gods. This offensiveness could be removed, if at all, only by moral means, that is, by expiation, atonement, or reparation. Through such regulation of the terms of admission to public worship the gods were utilized to promote peace and obedience. Later, indeed, some of this ground was lost, and the philosophers, like Xenophanes and Heraclitus, found public worship in Greece useless and superstitious.

Now, the belief that the guilt of a worshiper gave offense to the god, and that only in innocence could men approach the altar, was not due to the slow spontaneous clarifying of the popular consciousness or to selection and survival among the various notions men formed of the godhead. It was the discovery of an élite. The doctrine seems to have radiated from the masters of

the Apollo cult at Delphi, and to have been diffused by pious singers and by poets like Pindar. Says Pfeleiderer: "The rules to be observed in conducting the purificatory rites were fixed by the priesthood of Delphi, and by tradition and public law received public sanction over the whole of Greece."<sup>1</sup>

A system of law that functions without the civil arm is an ethical element in a civilization. And such a system is always the creation of the intelligent few. The law of Manu was not a code actually administered, but a *résumé* of what a small enlightened caste thought ought to be the law. The Law of Israel was worked out and interpreted by doctors and scribes who discussed its provisions freely among themselves, but presented an unbroken front to the outside world. The long apprenticeship required for admission to the learned caste, and the contrast between the freedom of thought within the four walls of the school of the law and the reticence observed outside the school, show that the Torah was the instrument of the Pharisees and not the custom of the people.<sup>2</sup>

For more than four centuries one of the great possessions of the classic world was the ideal of a life lived by a plan, a life superior to the play of the emotions, framed in accordance with reason, and having the beauty of unity, simplicity, and symmetry. Such an ideal becomes the parent of the political and civic virtues as soon as human law and justice are regarded as the dictate in the field of social relations of that Reason which rules the universe and which it is man's duty to put himself in line with. Now, this ideal of life was created and perfected by a handful of men, the Stoic philosophers, who succeeded in combining the Hebrew earnestness about right and justice with the Hellenic ideals of beauty and wisdom.

The romantic ideal of love we owe to an artistic élite, the troubadours. Arising from the sentiments felt by wandering lyrists for great ladies far above them in social position this ideal was spread by their songs through the castles and courts of mediæval Europe. There it blended with the ideals of

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. IV, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> BRAGIN, *Die frei-religiösen Strömungen im alten Judenthum*, pp. 78, 79.

chivalry, and thence it has passed downward through the people until it bids fair to govern the sentiments between most of the young men and women in western societies.

The knightly ideal exalting valor, loyalty, courtesy, and generosity was perfected within a religious-military caste. Since the days of the crusades nothing has been done to make that ideal more lofty or more attractive. But at first its virtues were of the few and for the few. Since then we have universalized them, making them binding in the treatment of all ranks. And by modifying the pattern of the knight into that of the gentleman, the chivalrous ideal has been fitted to become a reigning personal ideal in an industrial society.

In like manner Bushido, the knightly ideal that has been and still is the mold of Japanese character, was perfected within the fighting caste of *Samurai*. Says Nitobe: "As the sun in its rising first tips the highest peaks with russet hue, and then gradually casts its rays on the valley below, so the ethical system which first enlightened the military order drew in course of time followers from amongst the masses" (*Bushido*, p. 105). "In manifold ways has Bushido filtered down from the social class where it originated and acted as leaven among the masses, furnishing a moral standard for the whole people. The precepts of knighthood, begun at first as the glory of the *élite*, became in time an aspiration and inspiration to the nation at large; and though the populace could not attain the moral height of those loftier souls, yet *Yamato Damashii* (the soul of Japan) ultimately came to express the *Volksgeist* of the Island Realm." (*Bushido*, p. 108.)

It is perhaps in respect to men's valuations rather than their ideals that the influence of an *élite* is most marked. The prophet is the master of enthusiasms and detestations. But to the superior class it is given to modify the estimates of men. One line of improvement has consisted in drawing people away from turbulent pursuits liable to bring them into collision. Our ancestors, the primitive Germans, passed their time in drinking, gaming, and brawling, leaving industry to women and thralls. Their conversion to regular toil was not owing to contact with

Rome. In the classic world slavery had put a stigma on all manual labor. The great work-tradition of the Germanic race is traceable to the Benedictine monks, who in the Dark Ages taught from a thousand monasteries the lesson that labor is worthy and pious.<sup>1</sup> Again it was the Puritan minority that championed the quiet home pleasures and induced the English to give up the old orgiastic communal pleasures so prolific of harm. In India, the taste for learning and the contemplative pleasures has spread from one small section of the Brahman caste.

The spread of the superior ideal or valuation developed in the bosom of an élite is not wholly by the contagion of example. The van of the social procession urges and stimulates the rear to a double quick. The few press their desires, tastes, and opinions upon the many. This may be because it is to the interest of the few to get their ethical contribution generally accepted. Or the Hebrew or Puritan notion of joint national responsibility may spur the élite to an active campaign against ways of living or acting that might draw down on the nation the divine wrath. Again, when the general social consciousness is intense as compared with the class-, caste-, or sect-consciousness, we find in the possessors of the superior ethical view a disinterested eagerness to press it on the rest. The proselyting missionary spirit is awakened and inspires the minority to leaven the entire lump with their new ideal.

The ethical capital of a race is increased, not only by the contributions of minorities, but by those of individuals as well. The first elements of a social *ethos* may be spontaneously generated within a body of associates. The development of an ethical content in old local cults may be due to the influence of a priesthood. New value-scales that favor social tranquillity may be worked out in a class of men with superior economic vision or in a better economic situation than the rest. But such sublime paradoxes as that enemies are to be forgiven, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and that it is better to suffer than to do injustice, are the discoveries of genius. So at the

<sup>1</sup> See MONTALEMBERT, *The Monks of the West*.

beginning of many an ethical element stands the figure of the Great Man.

Pythagoras contends with the evils of a soft and luxurious society by reviving the Dorian ideal of abstinence and hardihood. Confucius contributes to Chinese civilization the Silver Rule and the majestic outlines of the "superior man." Zoroaster assists the transition from nomadism to tillage with new moral standards, fortified by a book of account and a last judgment. In his injunctions looking to the welfare of agriculture, the extermination of noxious animals, and the care of useful ones, we recognize the sage pioneer of progress. Mahomet, with his discovery of the just and compassionate Allah, creates among heathen nomads an ethical monotheism that becomes the corner-stone of a great civilization. Buddha puts new meanings into good and evil, and revalues the objects of human endeavor. St. Francis charms his age with his glowing ideal of a life of pure love freed from the servitude to material things. George Fox makes an appeal to the inmost self that evokes the Quaker conscience.

Whence comes the great man's ethical contribution? Shall we credit it all to his conscience or to his religious inspiration? No, we ought rather to lay it to his superior social insight. Usually the ethical grandee appears, as did Confucius or Amos or St. Francis, at a time of disorder, anarchy, and misery. He gazes upon society as the compassionate man looks upon a fever patient. Calmly he makes his diagnosis, thoughtfully he ponders the relation of symptom to deep-seated cause. "Here thou ailest," he says, "and here." Then confidently he proclaims his remedy. The prophet is therefore more than "one who pities men." He is a sociological genius. He divines the secret of peaceful union. He knows the terms on which men can dwell happily together. He utters the formula for coöperation. Confucius, with his doctrine of the five relations; Zoroaster, with his principle of piety in thought, word, and deed; Pythagoras, with his ascetic ideal; Jesus, with his maxim of returning good for evil—each brings his prescription. Each comes forward as a social physician.



There are prophets, however, who envisage a personal as well as a social problem. They offer redemption. They point out the way of salvation, not for men alone, but even for man. Buddha, believing that man is the dupe of his will to live, provides escape along the eight-fold path. Zeno sees that man is the sport of inherited appetites and affections, and can be saved only by that spark of the Universal Reason, which has been implanted in his breast. Epicurus finds man in bondage to custom, or superstitious fears, or speculative abstractions, and invites him to break away and enter on the quest of happiness. St. Paul beholds the unhappy struggle of the spiritual man with the natural man, and offers salvation by grace.

The genius who is to impress the mind of coming generations, as the hand impresses the waxen tablet, does not commend his ideal on the ground that it is good for society. He does not advertise it as a means of securing order. He knows that men will not do as they would be done by, or forgive injuries, or subject the impulses to reason, for mere utility's sake. The genius that succeeds takes high ground from the first. His way is not merely a better way of getting along together. He declares it the one possible path of life. It is the God-ordained type of living. It is prescribed by man's nature. It is the goal of history. It is the destiny of the race. So it comes to pass that the inventors of right and wrong, the authors of ideals, not only disguise their sociology as ethics, but often go farther and disguise their ethics as religion. The magistral tone of the heaven-sent prophet and the menace of divine wrath drive home the message of Zoroaster or Isaiah or Mahomet. It is possible for a secular thinker like Confucius to succeed. But, for the most part, men of the religious type, men of what we might call the religious temperament, are the ones whose ideals are accepted. No doubt hundreds of geniuses have lived who have had the insight into life and society needed to improve on the ideals of their time. But they have failed to score. Their message has not been listened to. The world has hearkened only to the seer of visions and dreamer of dreams.

There is another condition of prophetism that favors the religious enthusiast. Emphasis and the lofty tone can easily be

counterfeited, and hence for every true prophet there have been scores of pretenders. How then mark the true prophet from the false? How can the multitude tell the disinterested sage from the ambitious imposter? The masses have met this difficulty by applying the rude but effective test of renunciation. They will not receive a sterner ideal unless the author renounces all that common men strive for. The false prophet makes the credulity of his disciples the stepping-stone to power and ease. The true prophet proves his devotion by putting the world beneath his feet. Hence the locusts and wild honey, the staff and the sheepskin, have always been the sure credentials of the moral reformer. Even today, over most of the world, it is the *yogi*, the fakir, the saint, or the ascetic who wins authority over the popular mind in matters of conduct.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“We were surprised to find last year that the Gonds of an extensive tract in the Rewah state had given up drinking; and on inquiry we found out the reason to be the *fiat* of a yogi who had visited the state the year before. His order had gone forth from village to village, and the Gonds without question had become total abstainers.” — P. N. BOSE, *Hindu Civilization during British Rule*, Vol. I, p. xi.